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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C,  
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SUBJECT: CDA DISCUSSES SECURITY FOR HUMANITARIAN  
ORGANIZATIONS IN DARFUR WITH WFP

REF: KHARTOUM 1376

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: WFP Deputy Regional Representative Monika Midel emphatically denied that the WFP had sought GoS military action in North Darfur to provide security for humanitarian operations there. She confirmed the existence of black markets in Chad and Darfur where hijacked humanitarian supplies and vehicles are sold. She lamented that bandit and rebel groups are likely using the latter proceeds to buy more advanced weapons. CDA Fernandez noted that the GoS and rebel groups share responsibility for the insecurity in Darfur, and he sought suggestions on how to discourage criminal activity. END SUMMARY.

&Awfulness is Relative8 in Darfur  
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¶2. (SBU) On September 16, Charge Fernandez met with the World Food Program's recently arrived Deputy Regional Representative Dr. Monika Midel and Special Assistant Marian Yun to discuss the security situation in Darfur and its impact on humanitarian operations there. Dr Midel commented that the level of violence and suffering in the region seems to be on the upswing in recent months. CDA Fernandez agreed, but added &awfulness is relative8 in Darfur.

¶3. (SBU) He noted that the Darfur conflict has gone through three phases since 2004. First came the brutal GoS effort to crush the rebellion and the consequent violence against the civilian population, leading to their wholesale displacement. A decrease in the level of violence followed during negotiation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Post-DPA, the rebel groups fragmented and many are uncontrolled by any command authority. Midel observed that some of these &rebel8 groups now appear to have no ideological objectives and are little more than bandit gangs and as such as impervious to political or humanitarian imprecations.

Hijackings and Black Markets in Humanitarian Goods  
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¶4. (SBU) Charge Fernandez asked Dr. Midel about the recent kidnapping and the subsequent rescue of a group of WFP drivers. She confirmed that they had been rescued by another rebel group, not government forces, after several days of driving around the desert. These hijacked trucks are WFP property, unlike most of the stolen vehicles that are owned by commercial entities and contracted by WFP. Until now, WFP has enjoyed relative protection of its assets, which are very clearly marked with UN and WFP logos, banners, and look markedly different from other trucks in Sudan.

¶5. (C) She also confirmed that GPS tracking equipment installed in the stolen trucks had been instrumental in locating the vehicles and rescuing the drivers. She said that the hijackers are aware of the presence of GPS in the

vehicles and now routinely try to locate and disable it, tearing off any suspicious items from the chassis, but they had been unable to do so in this case. Midel expressed concern, however, that as organizations such as the WFP become better at concealing GPS in their vehicles, hijackers will respond by becoming even more ruthless, murdering captured drivers and aid workers to eliminate witnesses. She worried that as difficult as the situation is, the international community has to be careful not to make it worse by taking the wrong sort of action.

¶6. (SBU) The CDA asked what the WFP knows about the existence of reported black-markets in Chad and in Darfur itself, where rebel groups sell the looted humanitarian supplies and vehicles. Ms. Yun confirmed that WFP is aware of the existence of such markets. Dr. Midel said she is worried that we are on a downward spiral, in which the equipment and supplies intended for humanitarian relief, instead is becoming a source of revenue for groups that use it to resupply and upgrade their weaponry.

#### No WFP Interaction With GoS on North Darfur Offensive

¶7. (SBU) CDA Fernandez raised the GoS assertions (reftel) that the recent SAF offensive in North Darfur was in response to stated concerns of humanitarian organizations operating in Darfur, specifically including the WFP. Dr. Midel denied that the GoS was responding to direct requests by WFP and UNAMID to clear the roads for safe passage of humanitarian deliveries. &We have had no interaction with the GoS on this,8 she said.

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#### Discouraging Banditry

¶8. (SBU) The Charge noted that GoS claims to be targeting rebels/bandits in its activities in North Darfur. It says that it had tried to secure the main roads, and that rebels moved their activities to the feeder roads in response. He commented that there is some small truth in what the GoS says. In principle, protecting humanitarian operations should be the responsibility of UNAMID peacekeepers, but they have proven incapable of doing so, so far, leaving the GoS with an excuse to attack rebel areas with little regard for civilian casualties or creating thousands more IDPs.

¶9. (SBU) CDA noted that the rebels, as well as the GoS, are at fault for the dismal security situation in the region. He described some of the rebel groups as &like hungry wolves8 who snatch food from wherever they can. He wondered how the international community can put pressure on them to stop these criminal activities, for example, by shutting down the black markets where they sell stolen goods? By using older, less valuable vehicles? The international community should try to come up with innovative measures that will make it less worthwhile to steal. Dr. Midel replied that the humanitarian organizations already are taking some measures to lower their profile. For example, many NGOs are now using leased, unmarked vehicles instead.

#### Press The GoS To Do As Much As It Can

¶10. (SBU) The CDA added that the GoS is not in complete control of the situation in Darfur, and things would be bad there even if it were trying to improve them. However, there are things it is possible for the GoS to do, notably improving the humanitarian situation, and we are seeking to push them to take action on these. But so far they are doing the opposite of what we would like to see, e.g., they have been bullying humanitarian NGOs. The Charge noted that the GoS tries to wear the international community down. Rather than give up, it is important to keep the pressure on them and keep raising the key issues which make the regime uncomfortable.

Comment

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¶11. (SBU) Darfur,s dismal security environment stems from the combination of a toothless UNAMID, a government that is weak, but brutal, and a rebel movement that is fragmented and responds to no authority or direction. Rebel groups preying on humanitarian workers have been a growing component of this toxic mix and provide the government with a convenient justification for its own brutal actions. US, EU and Japanese COMs met on September 22 to discuss coordination on pressuring both rebels and regime on this troubling phenomenon. Embassy is providing a profile of hijacking and black market activities in Darfur septel.  
FERNANDEZ